Exploring the Bronx River for Its Treasure of Colonial Romances

Quaint Customs of Early Settlers Still Prevail in Picturesque Spots Along Stream That Bears Name of Adventurer Who Fell in Love With Dutch Maiden—Here, Too, Washington Wooed but Failed to Win the Sweet Mary Philipse—Revolutionary War Traditions Abound and Literary Associations Are Not Lacking

MOVING northerly from the monkey house in the Bronx zoo one is soon out of sight and sound of animals and humans and in the midst of the near-wild. There ensues a deep depression or slope, and crossing a bridge one looks over what at first glance appears to be a piece of stagnant water. A second glance reveals a small trickle down a fall of a few feet and a sluggish current bearing the liquid southward. The deep slope of the hollow, cliff-like in spots, indicates that this watery body might rise with a spring freshet, but in this summer solstice it has shrunk till it resembles nothing so much as a dismal muddy pond, suggestive of vicissitudes and fallen fortunes. Traces of winding moss-grown paths are visible among the trees, beyond which rises the higher ground of the park. A dilapidated building, Jacob Lorillard's snuff mill, is dimly reflected in the black water.

We are on the former Lorillard property which is now included in Bronx Park, and this melancholy spot is dignified by the name of the lake. It is in reality but a widening of the Bronx River.

Perhaps a new discoverer of the historic Bronx may not share with Admiral Lord Howe in his estimate of the river for that commander, contending against the unseen forces of liberty, rated it too high when he planned a coup which should utterly defeat Washington. This was no more or less than to send up the Bronx river a fleet of ships of the line to bombard the Continental army entrenched above the Harlem. At the same time the present day Stanley or Livingston, intent on opening up another Dark Continent, would be simple if he despised the Bronx. To follow its windings from the delta to the source will broaden his knowledge of what happened in the days of '76, introduce him to quaint customs still lingering from the early Dutch and other settlers and show him many and various landscapes, all beautiful. The Bronx river may not be as deep as the Mississippi nor as wide as the Amazon, but it will serve.

In the Days of Jonas Bronk.

In the days of Jonas Bronk, a Dane, who fell in love with a Dutch girl named Antonia, while he was on a business trip to the Brill in Holland the richness of this section of the new world which had been bought from the Indians by the Dutch West India Company was rolled on the tongue of the burghers like a tempting morsel. Bronk's spirit of adventure, as well as his cupidity, took fire and he emigrated with his wife and family, servants and all his possessions, buying from the Indian sachems Ranaque and Tacamuck at the first opportunity a freehold lying to the north of Kis Kil, that is, the Harlem River. He built him a stone house and roofed it with tiles and prepared to enjoy life like a patroon on his 500 acres. He enjoyed life for two years only, dying in 1641 before he had done more than to start clearing off his property and leaving a family. But he left his name to the region and the river which the Indians had called Aquahung.

This was during the reign of William the Testy (Governor Kieft), and in the same period that strange woman so far in advance of her day that she was always uneasy and kept everybody else so. Anne Hutchinson came from Rhode Island and settled at a place near the Hutchinson River named from her and known as Ann's Neck (now Pelham Neck). She was soon wiped out with all her family and servants by the Indians and likewise were many of the Dutch boers and English settlers who had made homes on the "Maine."

To start from the old Lorillard mill and wander down stream to the mouth of the Bronx where it flows into the East River, is as good a way as any to form an impression of the lay of the land. The Bronx Borough is composed of Westchester with Eastchester lying north, Pelham east and Morrisania and Yonkers to the west. The Bronx River catacorners through it, running through valleys formed by the slopes of the Westchester hills, through fields that are truly rural, through towns like Williamsbridge, where it is built up with houses on both sides and enclosed between stone walls and as it nears Manhattan it runs a deep and rapid stream as discolored by the factories on its banks as the Passaic, stream of dye works. The land it traverses between Hunt's Point and Clason's Point where the river debouches are flat and marshy, salt meadows interspersed by small tidal streams. Of these the Bronx is the most important as it is navigable to small vessels three miles from its mouth.

Imposing in number, superb in extent and situation are many of the estates past which or even through which flows the Bronx as it nears the salt. They belong to Mrs. Collis P. Huntington, T. C. Havemeyer, Alfred Hennen Morris and other fortunate people. The Huntington property formerly belonged to the Livingston family and it contains a show tree that is known the country wide. This is the cedar of Lebanon planted by Philip Livingston. It thrives remarkably in this soil having grown to a height of 40 feet, a girth of 13 feet while its spread of branches exceeds 50 feet.

Literary associations are not wanting either to this part of the Bronx River. Poe's cottage is still in Fordham and the park named from James Rodman Drake, is a public resort. Under a spreading butternut tree which stood near his home this early poet divested his mind of a poem from which are extracted these lines:

Yet will I look upon thy face again,
Mine own romantic Bronx, and it will be
A face more pleasant than the face of man,
Thy waves are old companions: I shall see
A well remembered form in each old tree
And hear a voice long loved in thy wild minstrelsy.

Striking west by a walk not too long or fatiguing on a pleasant day that crosses the Bronx time and again and for the most part follows back on its course one is soon in the little village of West Farms being inspected curiously by a number of cheerful women and a dense mass of children with fingers in their mouths. Bronxdale is but a step beyond and those two places were virtually one settlement. One is in Westchester but on the Eastchester road which was formerly a trail of the Siwanoy Indians. Where this trail crosses the Bronx River Washington established an outpost in October, 1776, to prevent the enemy from crossing at the head of the river.

Now we are on the White Plains road bound for Williamsbridge and in a silence only broken by the twittering of birds. The river flows without perceptible effort through fields only partly cultivated or through wild land. So sparsely settled is this region that New York, three or four miles away sinks into a memory. It would be easy to fancy that flats and their increased rentals were but diseased imaginings. And why aren't they? There is room and to spare for countless small houses to be built on these unused lands.

There is or was (it was halted during the war) a Gobelins factory at Williamsbridge and Frenchmen imported to weave the handsome fabric brought their families and settled on the Bronx as it cuts the village in two. They have done what they could to make this part of the river look like a French stream and with the stone steps leading down from the back yards, a boat tied to the landing and an archway of trees over the winding stream they have succeeded in beautifying it.

Nevertheless the prettiest work on the Bronx has been done by nature and in the detours made to permit her to work unmolested the discoverer is able to find a few interesting houses that date from the Revolution. One of these is the old Husted house, which stands east of the White Plains lane. Sills, rafters and studding are all of hewn timbers in this relic, held together by wooden tree nails. The old house was used as an inn for a time and tradition says that Washington in the fall of 1776, as he used to ride back and forth to inspect the outpost at Pell's Point, which was under the command of Col. Glover, frequently stopped there for refreshment, but whether of wet or dry history does not tell.

On the Woodlawn Road.

On the Woodlawn road (another detour but one first taken by the river) still stands the old Valentine house, which was for many years the homestead of the Varian family. In April, 1905, the farm was sold in building lots.

Who passes along these lanes without calling back the memory of a far away time when George III. reigned and railways were not and the Morrises, De Lanceys and Livingstons used to drive to New York along them once or twice a year in a heavy carriage drawn by four horses? Who cannot picture some of the features of that merry little Colonial society, its simple pleasures, its jokes and scandals, its quarrels and reconciliations?

Except on such long journeys everybody in Colonial days rode horseback, the women on a pillion, an additional saddle with a stirrup for their feet. They rode good horseflesh, too, for many of our forefathers kept fine horses for hunting and racing in the English fashion.

Westchester county was not so Dutch as some of the up-river counties, but here and there in a particularly dimpled valley the boers had made their houses as near a stream, the Bronx or some other, as they could find in their search for fresh water, shade and quiet. Their houses were all alike, built of stone and with gabled front, on the apex of which stood the customary weathercock. A wide door behind the stoop or porch admitted family and friends when both sections of it swung open. The lower half was kept closed to prevent the intrusion of pigs and chickens. In the kitchens were big fireplaces capable of burning a cord of wood a day. The beds were great four-posters having bottoms of sacking, through which ropes were drawn and tied to the pegs on the frame to hold the luxurious feather beds.

The customs of the Dutch have lasted longer in these quiet places than those which came down from the manor lords of English descent and still in the old Dutch farm houses one may happen on a real Dutch maiden of the kind that Irving described.

"Fain would I describe this little Dutch maiden," sighs Irving, "her blue eyes growing deeper and deeper, her cherry lips redder and redder * * * how she ripened and ripened and rounded and rounded in the opening breath of sixteen summers, until in her seventeenth spring she seemed ready to burst out of her bodice, like a half-blown rosebud."

Consolation in the Scenery.

Thus was female beauty translated into Low Dutch in the eighteenth century, and in the little lovely corners and nests of our beautiful Hudson country thus may it be translated to-day. But alas! the search is long and engrossing; it may not mislead the itinerant discoverer of the Bronx. He must be up and on. There is consolation in the scenery, for the twenty miles that separate Williamsbridge from White Plains are without their equals in the State for prettiness and variety of the cheerful rural order. Up and down dale tramp the old roads and across dimpling valleys, through clean little villages, with plenty of children and clean good looking mothers, now skirting woods upon which the summer sun threw a touch of glory, crossing cultivated fields that showed the richness of the soil, with the spires of churches rising in nearly every vista, now descending into a deep hollow full of luxuriant trees and berry bushes and lush green grass and always in sound of a laughing brooklet, the Bronx, which has recovered by this time the purity and limpidity it drew from the Pocantico hills. All the countryside has an aspect of drowsy well being, the comfortable farm buildings in a nest of greenery and the country estates, vast in extent and as to their buildings almost palatial, all in the neighborhood of the Bronx seemed to sleep in the mellow summer as if such were their normal condition and they knew nothing of bleak winter gales. It is, in truth, a pleasant country, this land of the Bronx; nature flatters happiness there and happiness, not slow to return the compliment, answers that all nature must be beautiful.

A beckoning spire calls us back to Westchester with the reminder that the first building to be erected and called an edifice of the Church of England is not to be neglected. It is St. Peter's, built in 1700 (the original church bore that date) and rectored first by Dr. John Bartow. The Rev. Samuel Seabury held the living in 1776 and upon the Declaration of Independence he shut up the church. A loyalist, of course, he took refuge in New York, sailing to London shortly after and returning to this country in 1785 as Bishop of Rhode Island and Connecticut. Seabury was the first anointed bishop in this country; he lived to be 86 and died in New London in 1796.

For thirteen years after our country's independence the old St. Peter's stood idle, every year growing more and more shabby and dilapidated. Too decayed to serve as a temple it was sold to Mrs. Sarah Ferris for ten pounds and a new church was erected on the same site in 1789, and the Rev. Theodosius Bartow, grandson of the first rector, was called to the parish. This wooden church burned down in 1790 and the old bell in the tower presented by Lewis Morris in 1677 was destroyed in the fire. The fifth church now stands on the old site.

Not too remote from the church stands an ancient vine clad inn which still is supposed to comfort travellers and shelter and feed them. The latter two it may do, but the first is doubtful.

Next morning the explorer was walking blithely on Broadway toward North White Plains, having left the Borough of the Bronx behind him.

For longer than a month Washington rode up and down this road, crossing and recrossing the Bronx River by rustic bridges that have long since decayed, and between the dates of October 21 and November 4, 1776, a great deal happened. The American commander displayed his military genius by retreating in the face of a superior enemy without loss of men or stores and fought the battle of White Plains, which resulted in the withdrawal of the British from Westchester, their campaign having proved a failure. These things are excellently taught in the Museum of North White Plains, and other things even more diverting. For an instance, the story of the unhappy love affair of General Washington for sweet Mary Philipse, daughter of the lord of Philipse Manor. It had its beginning long before the Revolution, and that Washington was serious is declared in letters extant which show that he left a friend to watch for him the current of events while he was forced by duty to return to Virginia. In one of these he is advised to hasten back to the scene because "Lieutenant Philip Schuyler courts the damsel assiduously and favorably." Schuyler won her, as we know, and built for her the home that is now a public show place and museum in New York, the Jumel Mansion.

It is by these excursions to the right and left of the Bronx River as it pursues almost a straight course for several miles that one's interest is kept up. For unadulterated history it would lag; not so for incidents that might be used in a novel.

One such detour made to a village that used to be called Washingtonville had for its objective the house where Adelina Patti, Carlotta Patti, the other children and Papa and Mamma Patti lived in 1854. The two girls went to school at the Union Free School in Mount Vernon and practised vocal exercises at odd times.

Along this road, too, went the expedition from Horseneck (Greenwich) undertaken by Capt. Isaac Sears in November, 1775, the purpose being to disarm the loyalist inhabitants of Westchester and seize the prominent Tories. Success attended the bold captain, whose force, beginning with but sixteen horsemen, soon grew to eighty. Among their prisoners was that rector Seabury, who had signed the White Plains Protest. Sears sent his captives back to Horseneck and rode at the head of his cavaliers into New York, where they destroyed the plant of James Rivington, the Royalist printer and publisher of the obnoxious *Gazetteer*. His type was badly pied and sent back to Horseneck to be melted into bullets.

North Castle is a village inhabited by people who live in the present and who have never heard or have forgotten about the past. Their acquaintance with the former seems to be vague. Above the village in a nest of ridges between hills a dozen tiny streams flow through fields and patches of woods. Which is the Bronx River?

Before the year 1888 it might have been possible to discover the source stream of the Bronx. In that year its waters were impounded by the construction of the Kensico dam. They supply (and other hill rivulets supply likewise) a reservoir on Gun Hill which has a capacity of a hundred and fifty million gallons when it is filled to a depth of forty feet.

OLD FOOT BRIDGE OVER BRONX RIVER AT WOODLAWN, NOW VANISHED FROM A SKETCH IN STEPHEN JENKINS BOOK OF BRONX BOROUGH

ST. PETER'S, WESTCHESTER, 1700. FROM A SKETCH IN THE VESTRY OF PRESENT CHURCH...

WHERE THE BRONX FLOWS INTO EAST RIVER OFF CLASON'S POINT.

Vanderlip Foresees New Financial Relationship With Europe

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tion in the way men's minds work and a change in the point of view from which they regarded relationships with one another. We are just becoming aware that we are going to emerge from the war with an industrial revolution already accomplished.

Five Great Principles.

"I would sum up my own view in regard to society's relation to labor in about this way: There are five great principles that we must accept. The first of these is a minimum wage. When we see that labor is not a commodity, that it is no longer to be treated as a commodity, we will come to see the justice in national laws formulating a reasonable minimum wage. This means a wage to all normal men that will permit them to marry, to bring up a family, and have left a reasonable margin for unusual emergencies. I believe there should be established trade boards in every industry. I think that that may reasonably be done in the next five years. To work it out in detail must be a matter of experiment and experience, but within that time, although we may not have it worked out in figures, we should have laid the principles and be on the road where we can logically apply those principles to all the varying conditions of industrial life and eventually arrive at the definite minimum way that every normal man, ready in his capacity to do his part, may count upon.

"After we have reached an understanding as to what the basic wage must be we must regard that really as a minimum and not as the general wage scale. I think we can reasonably leave to the haggling of the market what will be the reward for exceptional skill or exceptional industry. It would be a profound mistake to aim to fix a maximum wage. That would discourage all attempt at improvement. There should be left freedom for employers to pay more than this basic wage in order to secure men with special skill, energy, or industry. I am engaged in a food products business. In my works the present minimum for men is fifty-five shillings per week.

"It may be argued that it will be found that there are industries which, on account of the foreign competition or other reasons, will find it impossible to pay the minimum wage. If, after a fair trial, that is found to be so, the answer should be, 'Scrap the industry.' If an industry is found to be on such an economic basis that it cannot exist and pay a wage scale equal to what is found to be the basic necessity for the standard of life as I have outlined it then the country is better off if that industry goes out of existence.

"The second important point is that of hours. My own belief is that forty-eight hours a week will probably be found to be right. At the present time in the industry in which I am interested we have a forty-four hour week. We have left it to the workmen to decide how the hours shall be divided, and they have decided to work nine hours a day for four days and eight hours for one day, and to have Saturday entirely free. I think that decision is wrong. We lose the advantage of the short day's work and all the better production that would probably follow the short day's work. I think the arrangement should be five days of eight hours, with four hours on Saturday. However, our employees felt otherwise and we are making the experiment, although we do not agree with the plan of letting them do the full week's work during five days.

Security Against Unemployment.

"Third, labor should be given security against unemployment. That should be accomplished, not as we are doing in England now, but by means of an insurance fund to which the workmen, the employers and the State should all contribute. Conditions in England in one respect are quite different from conditions in the United States. Here we have nominally no large turnover of labor. In our works, for example, we employ three thousand girls. Our average loss of these employees is under three hundred a year. Our experience is that our employees come to us when they first begin to work and the women remain with us until they marry.

"Conditions in regard to unemployment vary with different industries, and may vary widely in the same industry at different times. That leads me to believe that while a proper insurance fund should mainly be created by the employees and the employers in each industry, there should be cooperation between the industry and the State so as to spread the liability and not make each industry wholly responsible for all of the unemployment in that industry. The present unemployment payments are not large enough, but they are larger than can be borne, perhaps, if there is not contribution to the fund by both the workers and the employers.

"We are all greatly concerned at the present time because of the number of unemployed, but that number is, after all, not remarkably large. What has happened is that the conscience of the nation has been awakened to its responsibility to the individual in a period of enforced unemployment, and in the light of that consciousness of responsibility the figures for the first time stand out clearly in our minds in regard to the number of unemployed. We have nearly always had unemployment but we have not been aware of its extent, not feeling a national responsibility toward those who are out of work. For a number of years prior to the war there was an average unemployment of 5 per cent. of the working population, and the greater part of this unemployment was owing to exigencies over which the employees had no control. A state of unemployment where no provision is made for the unemployed reacts on the whole situation in a way we have not before clearly understood. With 5 per cent. of the working population unemployed, and no means provided for their support, all industry feels the lack of their consumptive demand. If there was a sound general unemployment insurance the unemployed percentage of the community would still be in a position to exercise an effective demand for the products of industry, and it is apparent, therefore, that an adequate unemployment insurance scheme would reduce the actual unemployment. The best study which has been made of this whole subject will be found in Sir William Beveridge's book on 'Unemployment.' If the workers, the employers, and the State each contribute sixpence a week for each worker it is calculated that this would provide at least twenty-five shillings a week for unemployment insurance for everybody.

"I believe some most important results will flow from a sound unemployment insurance scheme. When we discover that properly looking after the unemployed is costing us a lot of money we will do a great deal to regulate unemployment.

Larger Control of Workers.

"Fourth, a larger control of industry by the workers. This should be the next step. The workers of this country have made up their minds that they do not intend to continue as wage slaves. They want a voice in the administration of the industrial part of the business in which they are engaged, and they want that not as an act of grace but as a right.

"I have been very anxious to know just what was in the minds of our workers in regard to what they want in their relation to industry. You cannot find that out merely by sitting on the opposite side of a table during an acute stage of a labor controversy. I have therefore taken a great deal of pains to get into touch, not only with the men in my own industry, but with employees generally. I have had representative workmen spend week ends with me and talk the subject over as man to man, and I have had meetings of representative workmen drawn from various industries to discuss the subject. These meetings were not so brief and formal that we failed to get at the heart of the question, but were conferences where we got into such relations with the men that we were enabled to bring out what was really in their minds. I would take a country hotel and bring together for the week end conference large groups of representative workmen and the result has been most enlightening.

"Fifth, the final step is to give labor a real interest in the profits of the business, and this is the lowest price at which the capitalistic regime can buy itself off from the danger of revolution. There is a great deal of preaching to the effect that the interests of labor and capital are identical. That is all bosh. The interests of labor and capital are not identical. It is labor's aim, and its proper aim, to obtain in the division between capital and labor all that it can, just as it is the aim of capital in its division of the results of capital and labor to obtain all it can. Up to the point of an industry going to smash the interests of labor are opposed to the interests of capital. How to make this division of the results of industry between labor and capital is the most difficult of all problems.

"In my own opinion we should look at it in this way: There should first be two definite charges against the net profits of industry, (1) a living wage to labor, and (2) a minimum return to capital. Then after labor has received a basic wage and capital has received a minimum return, all that is earned should be divided between capital and labor, and in my opinion it should be divided equally.

"I am so certain that we must reach some working plan along these lines, if the present system of society is to be saved, that I am having the subject carefully studied. One of the difficulties in this whole field of an adjustment between capital and labor is that the owners and managers of industry are so engrossed with their daily business problems that they have no time for a really scientific study of the subject. Realizing that, I have employed one of the ablest men I know, a lawyer of broad experience and keen intelligence, and he is now giving his whole time to a study of this particular problem in our own work.

"I am thoroughly convinced that if we are to save the present order of society we must make such thoroughgoing concessions as I have here indicated. I have had a talk recently with Sir Robert Horne, and I said to him, 'Are you out for mustard plasters? If you are out for mustard plasters only, if you are looking for mere palliatives, you are going to fail. My recommendation to you is to appoint the strongest royal commission that can be brought together and have them consider these last two points, that is, the part that workers should play in the control of industry and the methods by which labor can be given a real interest in the profits of the business. I would have that commission composed of the strongest possible representatives of both capital and labor, and I would make the decision of the commission law.'

"In working out a scheme for giving the concessions I have indicated to labor we must be careful to guard the freedom of labor. It is a great asset to the laborer that he can move freely from one industry to another and from one employment to another.

Foremen at Fault.

"I found that their complaint lay not so much against the managers of industry as against the foremen. They felt that foremen frequently were naggers, that these foremen were badly selected, that they were drawn from men who did not know how to lead, and instead of leading they tried to get results by driving. I have been so impressed with the justice of this view that in the industry in which I am interested we never appoint a foreman without first submitting his name to the Works Council; that is, to the

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